DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 400 HE 015 684

AUTHOR Ruin, Olof; Lindensjo, Bo
TITLE U 68--A Study of the Origins of the Reform of Higher Education. R&D for Higher Education. Information on Research and Development for Higher Education. 1982:4.
INSTITUTION National Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges, Stockholm. Research and Development Unit.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 13p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Board of Universities and Colleges, R&D Unit, P.O. Box 45501, S-104 30 Stockholm, Sweden.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Education; *Educational Change; Educational History; Federal Government; Foreign Countries; *Government Role; *Higher Education; *Long Range Planning; *Political Influences; Public Policy; Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS *Sweden

ABSTRACT

A study of the evolution of the reform of Swedish higher education is summarized. The study focuses on the goals, dimensions, and organization of the change, discussed in the context of state intervention, public policy, planning, and authority in European higher education. Three theories of the development of higher education (interventionist, technocratic, and politicization) are provided. Various stages and elements in the evolution of the reform are chronicled: 1960s expansion, the 1968 Commission on Higher Education and its inquiry process, discussion of educational goals, enrollment limitations or distribution, reorganization, and the final adoption of reform. The actual reform is analyzed as a political process based on four dominant planning ideologies that have redefined and reinterpreted major goals. These ideologies are bureaucratic-administrative, economic-technocratic, political-corporative, and symbolic. A brief bibliography is included. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ISSN 0347-4976

UHÄ THE NATIONAL SWEDISH BOARD OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

R & D for Higher Education

INFORMATION ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

ED224400

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

1982:4

CONCLUDED PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT

U 68 - A STUDY OF THE ORIGINS OF THE REFORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

CONDUCTED AT

Department of Political Science
University of Stockholm
S-106 91 STOCKHOLM
SWEDEN
Tel 08/15 04 80, ext. 219

SCIENTIFIC LEADER

Professor Olof Ruin

PROJECT LEADER

Bo Lindensjö, Ph. D.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

National Board of Universities & Colleges

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

In 1975 the Riksdag (i.e. the Swedish Parliament) resolved on a thorough-going reform of universities and colleges. This policy decision followed a large number of major official inquiries, particularly the 1968 Commission on Higher Education (otherwise known as U 68), which had been engaged since 1968 in solving the problems of universities and colleges which had become increasingly accentuated during the 1960s.

An almost explosive rise in admissions made the numbers of university students far greater than had been envisaged. The distribution of this student population between different study routes was also contrary to declared State intentions. Far more students than had been intended were taking "useless" subjects in the humanities or social sciences, while the number taking "useful" scientific and technical subjects or non-academic higher education was far smaller than intended. In addition, educational costs were spiralling and the efficiency of higher education was called into question.

HE 015 684

National Board of Universities and Colleges
R & D unit

P.O. Box 45501
S-104 30 Stockholm SWEDEN

PHONE
08-24 85 60

The research project *U 68 - A study of the origins of the reform of higher education*, which forms part of the Swedish *Research into Higher Education* programme, was planned as a study of the origins of the reforms whereby the above mentioned problems were to be solved. A study of the political process whereby various demands concerning higher education policy were articulated and melted down into a reform Bill could be expected to contribute towards a desirable *documentation* of the emergence of the new higher education policy and towards an *analysis* of the reform strategy involved.

What were the basic patterns in the evolution of the higher education reform? An answer to this question could be expected to furnish insights extending beyond the sphere of higher education and to suggest limits and possibilities of the Swedish reform model as such. The project was formulated in the awareness that factors other than the processes of drafting and decision making had an important bearing on the meaning of the higher education policy which was seen to have resulted from them. Accordingly, this study of the central formulation of higher education policy was combined with a study of its *implementation*, i.e. the process whereby the political content of the reform was translated into practice.

There is another way in which the Department of Political Science at the University of Stockholm has provided an important research environment for this project on higher education policy. Within the *Group for the Study of Higher Education and Research Policy* set up in 1977, extensive co-operation has taken place between Dr Rune Premfors and Ass. Prof. Björn Wittrock, who were engaged during the same period in research relating to comparative higher education policy and research policy respectively.

The project *U 68 - A study of the origins of the reform of higher education* has been reported on by Bo Lindensjö in the research report *Problems and courses of action in the higher education policy of the sixties*, Group for the Study of Higher Education and Research Policy, Report No. 3, University of Stockholm, November 1977, and also in his Ph. D. thesis *The higher education reform - a study in public reform strategy*, Stockholm Studies in Politics 20, 1981. The latter deals with public policy and reform strategy in the higher education sector during the 1960s and 1970s.

Empirically, the study has been made to concentrate on three of the overriding sectors of higher education, viz goals, dimensioning and

organization. The content and development processes of the higher education reform passed by the Riksdag in May 1975 are documented and analysed with reference to an analysis of the problems and courses of action dominating in the 1960s.

But the project has also been aimed at confronting the empirical material with a theoretical analysis, the point of departure here being the discussion of State intervention, public policy, planning and legitimacy which has taken place during the past decade, above all in West German political science. French and Anglo-Saxon contributions have also been taken into account in this connection. In the following pages, the thesis will be summarized under four main headings: Theory, Empirics, Analysis and Conclusions.

THEORY

Starting with a discussion of relevant literature, Chapter 1 expounds the theoretical premises of the thesis. In connection with an analytical approach developed within the Third Generation of the Frankfurt School, the State and the political processes are regarded as a system for the selection of courses of political action; this system helps to *eliminate* certain policy alternatives and to *support* and *legitimate* others.

Also in this chapter, three assumptions are formulated concerning the development of higher education. The *interventionist assumption* applies to the emergence of an attitude whereby higher education is increasingly viewed as an instrument for solving general political problems and attaining far-reaching objectives. The *technocratic assumption* refers to changes in the political appreciation of problems, decision-making bases and processes, which are expected to acquire a more technical aspect and to become increasingly dominated by experts and planners. The *politicization assumption*, finally, implies that the level of conflict in the higher education sector is expected to rise as a result of the increasing attention devoted to this sector by numerous and generally political protagonists and interests.

EMPIRICS

The prehistory of the reform of higher education

The second chapter of the thesis shows how the rapid expansion of the universities in the 1960s began to be seen as more and more of a problem and how the question of intake restrictions as a means of solving this problem acquired central importance. This means that broad, general political and interventionist objectives - growth, equality, reform capacity and freedom of choice - dominate at top political level, but also that these general aims tended more and more to be reinterpreted towards narrower administrative goals of efficiency and rationality. In one of the important educational docu-

ments from the mid-sixties, efficiency is actually accorded the status of an overriding goal of the education system. And in the development of proposals concerning fixed courses of studies at university arts faculties, through put and cost reduction are made to appear far more important than the major goals of general policy concerning higher education.

The 1968 Commission on Higher Education

The third chapter deals with the advent and composition of U 68. Its composition - the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education together with a nucleus of senior officials from the authorities concerned, surrounded by three reference groups representing the Riksdag, vested interests and closely affected groups - is interpreted as an expression of a bid to preserve the strong position of the central administrative authorities but to overcome the negative consequences associated with centralized administration during the past decade, viz the "technocratic" and "apolitical" traits of higher education policy. U 68's assignment, which included consideration of the question of intake restrictions, is shown to have been more far-reaching than the terms of reference of previous inquiries in other respects as well.

U 68 in action

The fourth chapter sets out the main contours of the actual inquiry process, the treatment of the main questions and the part played in this work by the various actors. Attention is drawn to the experimental use by U 68 of innovative working methods not previously encountered within the Swedish system of official inquiries. Thus the new discussions with relevant groups in the form of debate publications are analysed as examples of "symbolic" policy.

Goals of higher education

Chapter five sets out the Commission's discussions of goals and the conflicts thus precipitated. It is noted that, compared with previous discussions of goals, those conducted by U 68 implied a considerable shifting of ground. This is particularly the case with the goal of equality, which U 68 radicalized, but it also applies to the goal of free choice, which the Commission toned down, and to the economic goal, the realization of which demands a completely new strategy.

The new, overriding strategy of goal attainment advocated by U 68 was termed "recurrent education", but as time went on the Commission's discussions of goals became increasingly tradi-

tional and conventional. Bold initial formulations came to be jettisoned, but this chapter does point to one abiding feature of the changeable discussion of goals: all stages of U 68's proceedings are characterized by a highly rationalist and technocratic view of planning and goal attainment.

The question of intake restrictions

Chapter six shows how, to begin with, the Commission made a determined bid to reject the traditional strategies of educational planning, according to which the size of the education system should be determined by the demand of the labour market for highly educated persons or the demand of individual persons for higher education. Instead U 68 wanted a system whereby the distribution of students between different educational routes would be determined by the "true needs" of the labour market or of individuals themselves. This chapter also demonstrates a selectivity or "bias" in the technical methods of analysis and forecasting employed. Those methods were not calculated to elucidate the "true needs" of the labour market or the individual other than in terms of expressed demand. This chapter also shows that U 68's advocacy of comprehensive intake restrictions for higher education, which later became highly controversial, met with only a limited amount of resistence from the reference groups.

The organization of higher education

The seventh chapter of the thesis shows that uniformity, decentralization and societal influence were the organizational properties which U 68 regarded as distinctive of its proposed scheme of higher education organization. *Uniformity* was expected to facilitate general planning, in that central authorities would have an overview of the entire sector and would be able to co-ordinate measures aimed at one particular type of education with measures aimed at others. *Decentralization* of a great deal of decision-making authority would favour the flexibility of work at local level, while at the same time lightening the load on central authorities to such an extent that they would be able to concentrate their efforts on major, long-term and general questions. *Societal influence*, in the sense of general influence exerted by organizations representing public interests, would ensure that local work, though less regulated in terms of detail, would still reflect the prevailing values of society.

The organizational proposals proved to be among the more controversial recommendations made by the U 68 Commission, and they occasioned many special statements, particularly from representatives of higher education. The latter argued that uniformity was an obstacle to local work, that the decentralization advocated by U 68, seen from the viewpoint of the universities, amounted to centralization, and that societal influence constituted a new form of such centralization. The proposal

concerning societal influence, however, did not evoke such strong reactions in the reference groups as it was later to do in the circulation process and in general discussion.

The adoption of the higher education reform

The eighth chapter, dealing with the circulation/consultation process and the Riksdag debate, reveals a polarization of viewpoints concerning the proposed reform. Authorities and representatives of the major organizations endorsed the proposals in all essential respects, while higher education establishments - and to a great extent the graduate unions as well - took the opposite line. Eventually this polarization assumed party political form. The Liberal and Conservative parties, influenced by the stand taken by the persons affected, became increasingly vocal in their criticism of the reform. This in turn led to negotiations and compromises with the Social Democrats and the Centre Party, the latter being the least academic of the non-socialist parties, in order to salvage the reform, but the salvage operation was not successfully completed until the Bill had reached committee stage.

ANALYSIS

The ninth and tenth chapters of the thesis - concerning reform strategies in higher education policy and state interventionism via higher education policy - analyse the documented developments as a process whereby political alternatives came to be excluded, supported and legitimated.

Reform strategies in higher education policy

The *organization* which has formulated the higher education policy of the past decade can be characterized as essentially bureaucratic-administrative, highly segmented and sectorized and strikingly centralized. These organizational properties appear to have contributed towards the exclusion of more general, holistically oriented and long-term political alternatives from the agenda; they have supported and legitimated narrower, short-term and routine-formulated policy alternatives.

True, the dominant *educational ideologies* have expressly underlined the great societal objectives of higher education, viz economic development and growth, orientation towards the labour market, equality, freedom of choice and democratization. But these ideologies have been constantly accompanied by planning ideologies which have redefined and reinterpreted the major goals and quite often replaced them with *yardsticks* of the organization's own *efforts* in pursuit of these goals. More specifically, four such planning ideologies are discernible:

- A bureaucratic-administrative ideology, which has focused higher education policy on efforts to bring about change in society by manipulating the rules and organization of the sector. This has favoured organizational work allocation and specialization, close definition of the powers of different agencies, straight-line decision making and pyramidal hierarchies. Administrative rationality in the sense of clear rules and organizational overview has tended to supplant the original goals.

- An economic-technocratic ideology, which has focused higher education policy on "optimum allocation of human and material resources" and has tried to bring about change in society by means of carefully defined goals, the collection of large amounts of data, the use of technical methods of forecasting and analysis and the follow-up and evaluation of goal attainment. Technical rationality in the sense of "adjustment of means to ends" has been the guiding star here and has gradually tended to divert attention from the goals to the technical means of their attainment.

- A political, corporative ideology, which has focused higher education policy on the decision-making organization of the sector, its actors, political forces and their relative strength, and strategies of persuasion. In accordance with this ideology, planning work has come to concentrate on the rationality of political decision making in the sense of ability to make decisions on which unanimity can be achieved.

- A symbolic ideology, which maintains that desirable social changes can be achieved by being made the goals of educational policy and presented as motives for the same. The presumption is that if utopian goals - equality, genuine democracy and wellbeing - are posited and linked with concrete lines of political action, expectations will be mobilized which will serve as motive forces for the attainment of the objectives. This ideology favours the focusing of higher education policy on discussions of goals and on rhetoric, and it excludes terms of implementation from the political agenda.

The *processes* of higher education policy, finally, have undergone important changes during the period investigated. During the 1960s, a very limited number of actors in the sector conceded that courses of higher education policy could be formulated "technically", as a number of "apolitical" solutions to a series of well-delineated specific problems. The wider range of political participation from the late 1960s onwards made it increasingly difficult subsequently for lines of action to be formulated in these technocratic terms.

State interventionism and higher education policy

The tenth and final chapter of the thesis discusses the validity of the three assumptions contained by the introductory chapter. There is, of course, no question

here of testing a hypothesis in the stricter sense; instead this is a matter of theoretical interpretation, in which empirical material is confronted with particular theoretical assumptions and an assessment is made of whether the factual material augments or reduces empirical support for the assumptions.

The *interventionist assumption* is credited with substantial support. Ambitious and far-reaching aims - planning for growth, the demand of the labour market for educated persons, individual persons' demand for education, social equality and co-ordination with other sectors - can be found to have left their impress on higher education policy. However, a number of very important obstacles to such planning are observed, and these call for a modification of the assumption.

The *technocratic assumption* is also corroborated by observations showing that higher education policy has to a great extent been formulated by experts and that the documentation on which it is based has to a great extent comprised technical analyses and forecasts of the surrounding community's demand for higher education. It is questioned, however, whether these forecasts and analyses have really determined the course of higher education policy. Even in cases where proposals have been directly made as technical solutions to strictly delineated problems in reality, they seem to have resulted from conflicts of interest, political struggle and compromises.

In an important sense, the technical character of the proposals in these cases can be termed spurious, a matter of pseudo-technocratization, a symbolic policy in which the positing of precise objectives, the use of expert know-how and the selection of courses of action and their ranging in order of priority may have given the impression of policy emanating from general and common objectives and forecasts concerning reality, although in actual fact the situation has been one of classically **partial and interest-related policy.**

Finally, the *assumption of politicization* is also supported by observations showing that the level of conflict *within* the higher education sector rose during the late sixties. This internal politicization in turn was followed by an external politicization, a counter-polarization *from outside*, by organized interests and political parties attempting to transform higher education and make it more receptive to what they regarded **as general societal interests relating to higher education. But this assumption** of politicization also requires modification,

because nothing corroborates the assumption that politicization is an expression of any long-term or thoroughgoing strategy of change of or through the higher education system.

Two fundamental models of reorganizing the higher education sector can be discerned in the process investigated: one focusing on centralization and technocratization, and the other dominated by decentralization and participation. Neither of them, however, appears to have overcome important obstacles to planning. When planning processes have, by technocratic means, successfully shielded plans and decisions from the influence of the parties and groups involved, the result tends to take the form of reforms and decisions provoking counter-reactions from the affected groups and other interests within the sector when they come to be implemented. And when planning processes, by means of decentralization and participation, allow many parties with differing interests to take part, difficulties seem to arise in the formulation of any lines of public policy whatsoever. Neither of the two models appears capable of solving the problems referred to. The models seem to alternate in a process of oscillation, without solving the problems or realizing the aims which have brought them into existence. The implementation of one seems invariably to generate problems which can only be tackled by means of the other.

CONCLUSIONS

From what has now been said, one might feel tempted to conclude as follows:

1. Critical research cannot be of any use to a sectoral agency in its task of administering and proposing lines of development for its sector.

2. Alternatively, public attempts at planning and formulating courses of action are futile, because they do not lead to goal achievement in any more ambitious sense.

Neither of these conclusions, however, follows from the preceding discussion.

The more closely a social scientific research project resembles a sectoral agency's own investigations - accepting its view of its own history, accepting its view of its social usefulness, endorsing its current problem perception, sharing its views as to which viewpoints in the sector are progressive and conservative respectively, acknowledging its assumptions concerning the efficacy and inefficacy of different means and its views concerning ways between intentions and effects - the less likely, one presumes, are sectoral officials to have anything to learn or to be told something which they do not really know better than the researcher. Therefore only a project showing sectoral history, problem interpretation or assumptions concerning ways

between intentions and effects can conceivably point to new ways worth trying.

Of course, the failure of a public planning process to solve the problems or achieve the aims defined for it does not mean that the process has been futile or unnecessary. Public planning can be important from many viewpoints. It can point to - if not determine - the arena in which continuing work is to take place. It can channel resources to particular actors in this arena and, through its formulation of problems, influence the agenda there. It can present opportunities for settling conflicts between disunited parties. It can facilitate a new **view** of sectoral history and help to create arguments and ideas which will make it possible to interpret ongoing developments in the sector, motivate them and provide alibis for them. It can be a forum for discussions concerning different departures to be tested for the future. And finally, it can be a platform from which "unrealistic" expectations concerning the sector can be toned down and more realistic ones propagated.

Bo Lindensjö

1982-08-02

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archer, M — Educational Politics. A model for their analysis. In Broadfoot et al: Politics and Educational Change. London, 1980.

Blanke, B — Entscheidungsanarchie und Staatsfunktion: Zur Analyse der Legitimationsprozesse im politischen System des Spätkapitalismus. In Ebbighausen, R (ed): Bürgerlicher Staat und politische Legitimation. Frankfurt/M, 1976.

Boudon, R — Effets pervers et ordre social. Vendome, 1977.

Broady, D — Utbildning och politisk ekonomi. (Education and political economy.) Stockholm, 1978. *(In Swedish)*

Edelman, M — Politics as Symbolic Action. Chicago, 1971.

Habermas, J — Legitimationsprobleme im modernen Staat. In Zur Rekonstruktion des historischen Materialismus. Frankfurt/M, 1976.

Hernes, G — Makt og avmakt. (Power and Impotence.) Oslo, 1975. *(In Norwegian)*

Hernes, G — Forhandlingsökonomi og blandingsadministration. (Negotiatory economics and mixed administration.) Oslo, 1978. *(In Norwegian)*

Hirsch, J — The State Apparatus and Social Reproduction. In Holloway, J & Picciotto, I: State and Capital. A Marxist Debate. London, 1976.

Levin, H M — The Identity Crisis of Educational Planning. In Harvard Educational Review, vol 51, No 1, 1981.

Lindensjö, B — Problem och handlingslinjer i sextiotalets universitets- och högskolepolitik. (Problems and courses of action in the higher education policy of the sixties.) Group for the Study of Higher Education and Research Policy, Report No 3, 1977. *(In Swedish)*

Lindensjö, B — Effektivitet, legitimitet och kris. (Efficiency, Legitimacy and Crisis.) In Häften för Kritiska Studier, No 5, 1978. *(In Swedish)*

Lindensjö, B — Politisk planering. Verklighet eller myt? (Political Planning. Reality or Myth?) In Häften för Kritiska Studier, No 6, 1979. *(In Swedish)*

Lindensjö, B — Högskolereformen - en studie i offentlig reformstrategi. (The higher education reform - a study in public reform strategy.) Stockholm Studies in Politics 20, 1981. *(In Swedish, with an English summary)*

Majone, G
Wildavsky, A — Implementation as Evolution. In Policy Studies Review Annual, vol 2, 1978.

March/Olsen — Ambiguity and Choice in Organization. Oslo, 1976.

Naschold, F — Schulreform als Gesellschaftskonflikt. Frankfurt/M, 1974.

Offe, C — Berufsbildungsreform. Eine Fallstudie über Reformpolitik. Frankfurt/M, 1975.

Olsen, J P — Politisk organisering. (Political organization.) Oslo, 1975. *(In Norwegian)*

Ronge / Schmeig — Restriktionen politischer Planung. Frankfurt/M, 1973.

Roemer, R E — Vocationalism in **Higher** Education. In The Review of Higher Education, Winter 1981, vol 4, No 2.

Scharpf, F — Planung als politischer Prozess. Aufsätze zur Theorie der planenden Demokratie. Frankfurt/M, 1973.

Civiltryck AB Stockholm 1982
LF/ALLF 282 82 070